

1 **Board of Selectman Meeting Minutes**
2 **Monday, October 3, 2011**

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4 Chairman Bruce Bowler, Brad Galinson, Tom Grella, George Infanti, Dwight Brew
5 were present. Also present were Town Administrator Jim O'Mara and minute taker
6 Chris Woodbury.

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8 **Call to Order**

9 Mr. Bowler called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm

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11 **Pledge of Allegiance**

12 Pledge of allegiance was lead by Mr. O'Mara

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14 **Citizen's Forum**

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16 **Administrative Business**

17 **Approval of the Minutes for September 12,2011**

18 **Mr. Brew moved to Mr. Infanti seconded the motion Vote: 4-0-1 Mr. Galinson**
19 **abstained.**

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21 **Approval of the minutes for September 19, 2011**

22 **Mr. Brew moved to Mr. Infanti seconded the motion Vote: 4-0-1 Mr. Galinson**
23 **abstained.**

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25 **Approval of the minutes for September 26, 2011**

26 **Mr. Brew moved to Mr. Infanti seconded the motion Vote: unanimous.**

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28 Mr. Brew stated that all meeting minutes need to be approved.

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30 Mr. O'Mara asked that the meeting minutes be accurate and also discussed the
31 corrections for the September 26, 2011 meeting minutes.

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33 Manifest totals:

34 Accounts Payable: \$3,435,496.51 for September 27th through October 3rd

35 No Payroll Manifest
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38 **Town Administrator Report**

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40 Mr. Marsh and Mr. McKinney discussed the results of the 2011 valuation updates.
41 They also reviewed the value change average decreases and the 2011 preliminary
42 value. After reviewing the assessed values for 2010 and 2011, the overall
43 adjustment was -309,092,900. The overall median assessment to sales ratio, overall
44 coefficient of dispersion and price related differentials were all within IAAO
45 standards. They also spoke about the informal hearings.
46

47 Mr. Brew and Mr. Marsh discussed the overall median assessment to the sales ratio,
48 and it was stated that this was not at 100% due to the equalization evaluation
49 periods being different from the State's evaluation period, therefore it was not at
50 100%; it was at 95%. It was stated that when the State does an evaluation it should
51 be at 100% due to their evaluation period.

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53 Mr. Marsh asked that a motion be made to accept the 2011 valuation.

54 **Mr. Infanti move to Mr. Grella seconded the motion Vote: unanimous**

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56 Mr. Marsh asked that a motion be made for the MSI form.

57 **Mr. Infanti moved to Mr. Grella seconded the motion Vote: unanimous**

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Discussion Items

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Town Clerk

63 Ms. Demers discussed the duties of a town clerk such as motor vehicle registration,
64 dog licenses, voter registration, election preparation, and vital record management
65 including preparation of marriage licenses, birth, and death certificates. The given
66 vehicle registration has gone down from last year. This may be due to the amount of
67 homes on the market at this time. She also reviewed the staff in her office, which
68 includes herself as well as one part time employee. She is still inquiring about credit
69 card use (as far as Visa), which is not accepted. Dogs can now be registered online.
70 She explained that there will be three elections in the next fiscal year; there for costs
71 will increase. Due to the possibility of absentee ballots increasing, postage costs
72 may increase as well. She included that October 14th will be the last day to change a
73 party affiliation for the presidential primary and she will be available in her office
74 from 7pm to 7:30 pm that Friday night to accept changes. Voters can also go to
75 SOS.NH.GOV to view the state of NH registered voters. She then continued to thank
76 the board for there support.

77

78 Mr. Grella and Ms. Demers discussed the amount of people that visit the office from
79 out of town due to the schedule availability compared to other towns. Paper work
80 to be signed for boat registration was also reviewed.

81

82 Ways and means and Ms. Demers reviewed the issues with Visa not being accepted
83 through the credit machine provided, but people are able to use a Visa, if they
84 process there registration online. A suggestion that was made by Ms. Demers was
85 an ATM being provided in the town hall, so that people would not have to go to
86 Moulton's to get money when it is needed. Ms. Demers asked that the information in
87 regards to the change for October 14, as well as the website possibilities be
88 televised.

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Tax Collector

92 Ms. Stout proceeded to discuss the tax collectors duties and responsibilities. She
93 informed the board that the tax collector is responsible for collecting the town,
94 county, and schools property taxes. Her responsibilities also include quarterly
95 billing and collection of the four phases of the Baboosic Lake Community Septic.
96 The goals that were discussed for the tax office included offering the residents of
97 Amherst a variety of payment methods. Debit and credit use for the tax payers are
98 still being worked toward, both at the window and online. She advised the options
99 of paying taxes in advanced installments, instead of making two large payments
100 throughout the year, and how important it is for the residents to be aware of this
101 option. It was also reviewed that it is vital for the town to offer our residents every
102 opportunity available to assist them in the payment of their taxes.
103

104 Ms. Stout and the board discussed the percentage collected verses what was sent
105 out, as being 96.5%. The board also wanted to recognize the excellent effort that is
106 put forth from Ms. Stout. It was recognized that work had been done in order to
107 make this information more understandable for the elderly and the information was
108 broken out into increments, and this was found to be helpful.
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112 **Planning and zoning**

113 Mr. Tiedmann discussed that due to the present business conditions, there have not
114 been many changes in this report from last fiscal year. New and old projects have
115 been reviewed with the developers. This department manages a varied number of
116 activities such as all building permits applied through the departments, which are
117 processed by the staff and approved for NH Building Code compliances by the
118 building inspector, also the zoning compliance by the planning director. The
119 planning director is responsible for all septic system issues. The planning director is
120 also responsible for all zoning violations and legal issues resulting from such
121 violations. The long-term goals for the planning and zoning department are to have
122 the planning board and zoning board of adjustment files be more accessible to not
123 only the town hall staff, but also the general public. A suggestion for this would be
124 to purchase a large size scanner. The building inspector is only working two days
125 per week due to the decrease in residential and commercial developments and some
126 medical issues. Mr. Tiedmann reviewed that the department can move thru the next
127 few years with about the same fiscal impact as previous years.
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129 The board and Mr. Tiedmann reviewed the possibility of a building being built on
130 101A. It was discussed that the uptake in property this year is not the same as last
131 year. Residents are willing to put money into renovations and additions, but it is
132 very difficult to sell a brand new house when the evaluation has gone down and the
133 lumber costs have increased. It was discussed that there have been a lot of sign
134 violations that may cost a significant amount of money to repair or replace. In
135 regards to these violations, the court system is not set up to process this
136 appropriately.
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Finance

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Ms. Howe discussed the finance department's responsibilities such as record keeping on behalf of the town. This includes the payroll process, state reporting requirements, and process and procedures required by the GASB. Currently the duties for the finance department are being divided by, not only the finance director and a part time assistant, but also members of the administration department. The finance department continues to work closely with the town treasurer to ensure the town receives competitive interest rates and protects taxpayer funds during economic challenges. Currently the town is utilizing multiple resources to stay in compliance with the federal and state labor laws, the department feels as though a possible solution would be to increase the part time assistant position to a full time position. Ms. Howe feels that the department has future opportunities with the current reporting software and would like the board to consider exploring new technology to assist in making the finance department more efficient, diversified, and interactive.

The board and Ms. Howe reviewed a possible software update for FY14 at the approximate cost of \$50,000 to \$60,000 and up, this technology must be able to read the raw data that the finance department has to enter. A motor vehicle form was presented and the only feedback was to have a column for the targeted replacement dates, these dates are unknown seeing as how all vehicles are different and it depends on the use of the vehicle. This column will be added.

Ms. Lapointe began by asking the board if everyone had received the library newsletters and proceeded to pass it out to anyone who did not receive it. She did point out that the missions, vision, and goals for the library are listed on her desk. The library is fully staffed, however has had some long-term absences, which have led to children's programs being canceled during this time. A telescope has been provided for members use. Also, there has been an update on new materials where as the library is now compatible with the kindle. More members have showed interest in the shared materials. The library has approximately 100,000 visitors annually. The library website has currently become a mobile friendly site due to technology being a critical component of the services provided. A space-planning project has begun and is funded by the current budget, there have been no large expenses and if need the library will seek outside funding.

The board and Ms. Lapointe discussed the van delivery service being cut due to the state budget cuts. Also reviewed, was the cost of eBooks for the members and how there is currently a structure and formula in place to pay the dues. There are now 4 new employees in place of the 3 previously vacant positions due to these employees being high school students with limited schedules. A fax machine is available, with

184 proceeds going to the fax machine owner; this service is not regularly used by the
185 members but is more of a convenience.

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188 Ways and means and Ms. Lapointe discussed that members will still be able to
189 receive material sent from other libraries; it just may take more time due to the
190 backlog of materials still in transition. The circulation process for the downloaded
191 materials is the same for the iPad, iPhone and now the kindle. Also reviewed was
192 the cost for the software updates for FY14 and whether the town hall computer fund
193 will be used.

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Recreation –

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197 Ms. McMillan started by thanking the board for this opportunity. She discussed the
198 budget for the recreation department, which has not changed from last year; this
199 includes the three sources that fund the recreation department. The budget has
200 only increased by 2% for FY12. One of the goals this department is working
201 towards is to move the playground apparatus from Cemetery Field to another
202 location. In addition, she also discussed the replacement of the maintenance shed,
203 which has been damaged from the wind. The plan is to fund this project through the
204 insurance reimbursement and field user fees. Another part of the recreation
205 department's budget is planned to go toward refurbishing lower Wilkins field. This
206 project was denied for funding and is in the worst condition. This will cost
207 approximately \$40,000 to \$60,000. Also reviewed was the intention of building a
208 retaining wall at Baboosic Lake, this was requested three years ago. The most
209 common question asked when people are relocating to Amherst, is how is the school
210 system as well as the recreation. Another discussion item was the budget planning
211 for FY13-15, which included the replacement of the 2001 recreation vehicle and also
212 the replacement of the 1985 tractor.

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214 The board and Ms. McMillan discussed the refurbishing of lower Wilkins field, due to
215 the large amount of ware and tare due to the amount of activity on this field. This
216 field does not have irrigation, as well as no invested seed. The other fields in town
217 are well maintained; the challenge with this field is that the amount of use on this
218 field makes it particularly difficult to maintain due to the short 45-minute window
219 allowed for maintenance. This issue has gone too long without any resolution. This
220 field can be self sustained; it just needs to have another arm for funding and user
221 fees need to be used for the funding of this project. The damage done to this field is
222 not due to football because football is played on the upper field, which has artificial
223 turf and is easy to maintain. A suggestion made was to use revenue from possible
224 events that the field may be used for. It was asked that there be additional funding
225 through fundraising outside of the recreation staff. Another point that was made is
226 that the grants that were applied for this year were all not granted due to all of the
227 competition. These grants will be applied for again as soon as they are available in
228 2012. It will be brought to the schools attention that there is funding needed for the
229 refurbishing of this field.

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Ways and means and Ms. McMillan discussed the sprinkler system that was used for Lower Wilkins Field in the past and that these sprinkler still work, but they are water cannons and are very labor intensive. Also reviewed was the fact that the fields are the recreation department's responsibility, even though private organizations use them, because the fields are owned by the school district and leased out to the recreation department for use. In regards to the user fees collected, these moneys are only collected from nonresidents and are put directly into and account for the maintenance of the fields. Also there are fewer children in town apposed to when these fields were originally built.

Ways and means

The ways and mean team recommended that the budget for all department heads be held at a 0% increase of their previous budget.

A discussion ensued by the board discussed that this most likely will not be a possibility and brought there points to the ways and means team. This included Mr. Brew adding that if it weren't for the variables of how much the road bond interest is, and principle, which may be \$600 - \$700, this may have been something to consider. Also if the budget is held at 0% increase, there would need to be cuts in other budgets and this would be interesting to see due to the fact that voters have already approved the CBA of \$80,000 that was paid this year. The town will pay taxes on the CBA and road bonding which is an additional \$20,000. Mr. Bowler also suggested that after the contractual obligations are taken into consideration then the budget might be able to work up from 0%. Mr. Infanti included that the budgets are already starting at a 70% increase due to possible insurance increase on the bonds. These commitments have already been made.

The ways and means team agreed with the board, but would like the board to consider this recommendation, taking in mind that the budget could start at 0% after those variables are considered. The suggestion is to start at a lower starting point and work their way upward from there. The department head needs to put forth their priorities and think about the lower percentage for a starting point.

A discussion ensued by the board ensured that the departments need to convey there most important priorities in order for this to be possible. If the department heads think over there budgets and try to fit everything in the same budget as last year there will be significant cuts that may not work. The town has never been asked if they would consider lower taxes for fewer services to be provided.

275 The ways and mean team stated that in the past the option of fewer services
276 provided would give the option of fewer taxes to be paid.
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278 Mr. Galinson stated that there is a higher budget increase now compared to the past
279 and that each department should put together a priority list of there wants and
280 needs. Also the budget should realistically start the default not 0%.
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282 The ways and means brought to the boards attention that the only relevance this
283 has is to have the heads of the departments reevaluate there priorities not to have
284 the public lose any priorities or make any cuts. It is suggested that the budget start
285 with the default not 0% increase.
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287 Mr. Galinson does not agree with the budget starting with 0% and suggests that the
288 budget starts with the default. He stated that last year the selectman asked that the
289 department heads come back with there best budget and if it was too high they were
290 to go back and reevaluate their number and present something different. When this
291 was done, the department head came back with their budgets, which included the
292 default plus a percentage of cut. This request is impossible to have a 0% increase for
293 the department budgets taking into to consideration the inflation and such.
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295 The ways and means team discussed the default budget and how this is a mystery. It
296 may be easy to see what the contracts are, but there is no number for the default. If
297 you look at other towns, there have been cuts to their services due to their budgets;
298 the services would like to be maintained in Amherst. Maybe this decision should be
299 left to the voters.
300

301 Liz Overhault stated that the voters are anticipating an increase in taxes but would
302 like their taxes used in a certain way
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304 Bruce Berry asked if there is an expectation for the default to stay this way this year
305 or will there be an increase?
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307 Mr. Galinson, Mr. Brew, and Ms. Howe discussed the default schedule and how fuel
308 and other things affect this. When the fuel prices increase, the default increases;
309 when the fuel decreases, the default decreases. This has been done both ways in the
310 past.
311

312 A discussion ensued by the board reviews the default for this year being 6.5% or
313 higher. Also discussed was how that every year the bond increases in cost and has
314 been voted by the voters to approve the bond; therefore the voters are expecting to
315 see an increase in their taxes. The bridge bond is included in this increase. It was
316 discussed that the default would be looked at across the departments, although
317 some funding may go more toward certain departments than others. The board
318 decided to reconvene with more information and in regards to what to start the
319 budgets with. Mr. O'Mara does need more information for this meeting including
320 numbers. This meeting will reconvene on Tuesday, October 11, 2011 at 6:30pm to

321 discuss the budget default verses starting with 0%. This meeting should only be
322 about 30 minutes.

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Action Items

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Approve

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Forums MS-1

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Approved

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Forums MS-5

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Mr. O'Mara asked that the board sign the financial report.

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Mr. Bowler recognized the department heads that have been attending the meeting
336 in regards to the budget for the past several weeks. This shows a team effort from
337 the town.

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Mr. Infanti moves to Mr. Grella seconded the motion Vote: unanimous

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Abatements

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Abatements:

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LUCT:

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Tax Credit:

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Old Business

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New Business

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Non-Public Session

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*The Board entered non-public session with Jim O'Mara pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II (b)
357 and NH RSA 91-A:3 II (d). Selectmen present: Bruce Bowler, George Infanti, Thomas
358 Grella, Dwight Brew and Brad Galinson. Also present were Town Administrator Jim
359 O'Mara, Nancy McMillan and Wendy Rannenberg.*

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Wendy Rannenberg presented and reviewed the report of the Cemetery Field Replacement
362 Committee. At 10:15 pm Nancy McMillan and Wendy Rannenberg exited.

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Also while in non-public session The Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator
365 discussed the hiring of a public employee.

366

367 ***At 10:35pm a motion was made by Mr. Infanti, second by Mr. Grella to re-enter public***
368 ***session. Roll call vote: Mr. Bowler – yes; Mr. Brew – yes; Mr. Infanti – yes; Mr. Grella –***
369 ***yes; Mr. Galinson – yes.***

370
371 Chairman Bowler indicated that no motions were made and no votes were taken while in
372 non-public session.

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374 ***Mr. Brew moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:36 p.m., second by Mr. Galinson. Vote:***
375 ***Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:36 pm.***

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